

I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

Text: Jeremiah 31:34 A 3-31-19 4th Sun. in Lent Passion History, part 4 Ps. 86 Resp. Ps. 85
Hymns: 279, 156, 360, 778

GOD REMEMBERS OUR SIN NO MORE

Today Thy gate is open,
And all who enter in
Shall find a Father's welcome
And pardon for their sin.
The past shall be forgotten,
A present joy be given,
A future grace be promised,
A glorious crown in heaven.

O all-embracing Mercy,
O ever-open Door,
What should we do without Thee
When heart and eye run o'er?
When all things seem against us,
To drive us to despair,
We know one gate is open,
One ear will hear our prayer. (TLH #279:2, 4)

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

We all forget things: what we were looking for when we walked into a room to get it, our keys or our cell phone, someone's name, a birthday or anniversary, and so on. Forgetting and struggling to remember are human weaknesses. Did you know that God can forget? With God, remembering and forgetting are not signs of weakness. So far in our Lenten series we've been looking at things God remembers, and the gracious action God takes as a result. Today we're going to look at something God forgets. And when God forgets, He takes no action.

Sometimes we try to forget our sins. We've done something we shouldn't have and we ignore it instead of confronting it, or we make excuses for ourselves. We can forget sin by becoming desensitized to it, through letting ourselves be influenced by the world, through listening to Satan's lies, and through indulging in pet sins.

In our text God speaks of our *"iniquity."* *"Iniquity"* in the original text is literally *"what is bent/twisted/distorted."* *"Iniquity"* refers to the sinful things we do and to their consequences: guilt, blame, and punishment. Sin has *"twisted"* us, and sin *"[twists]"* and *"[distorts]"* every part of our lives. In our text God speaks of our *"sin,"* which in the original is literally *"missing the mark."* God leaves no excuses for our sins. Any time we *"miss the mark"* – any time we don't do exactly what God tells us to do in His Word – we have sinned.

What God says is wrong, is wrong. When we sin and try to forget it, that sin doesn't go away. It remains on our conscience. That sin stands between us and God. It keeps us from being at peace with God. We need to admit to ourselves that we have sinned, confess it to God, and ask God to forgive us. The only way sin can be removed and we can be at peace over it is through repentance and receiving God's forgiveness. The psalmist says, *"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin"* (Ps. 32:5).

God knows everything. Yet in our text God says, *"Their sin I will remember no more."* How can God not remember our sins? When someone has sinned against us it can be hard for us to forgive and forget and let it go. When God says, *"I will forgive their iniquity,"* the word for *"forgive"* in the original is never used when speaking of the way we humans forgive. It is only used when speaking of the way God forgives. Unlike us, God has no problem forgiving and forgetting. When God says, *"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more,"* *"forgive"* and *"remember"* in the original are on-going actions. God keeps on forgiving us, and God keeps on not remembering our sins. *"Remember"* in the original also means *"call to mind."* When we tell God we're sorry for something we've done wrong, He forgives it and forgets it and chooses to never call it back to His mind again.

Sometimes we remember a sin that God has forgiven and forgotten, and we still feel bad about it. We know we sinned. We know we don't deserve God's forgiveness. Instead of trusting in God's forgiveness, we're afraid that God is angry with us. It seems too good to be true that God can and does forgive us, and forget our sins. But it is true! God assures us in His Word, *"My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways"* (Is. 55:8). The Bible says, *"God is love"* (1 Jn. 4:8). Undeserving sinners though we are, God loves us and forgives us and forgets our sins. The psalmist assures us that God *"does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us"* (Ps. 103:10-12, NIV).

If we had to make up for our sins or cover them ourselves, our sins would still be there. It's only in Jesus that our sins are removed. God doesn't do to us what we deserve because of our sins. God does not remember our sins and takes no action on us for our sins because the action was taken on Jesus. The Bible says, *"He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). God took every one of our sins off of us and put them on Jesus. Jesus died for our sins on the cross and took them all away. God has covered us with Jesus' righteousness. God doesn't see our sinfulness, but only the perfect righteousness of His Son covering us. When we tell God we're sorry for our sins and He forgives us we really can remember our sin no more. Jesus assures us, *"Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven"* (Mt. 9:2). Take God at His Word and rejoice in the fact that when God forgives us He truly forgets our sins and lets them all go.

"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy" – Psalm 103:8.
"Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" – Lamentations 3:22-23. *"Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He*

does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” – Micah 7:18-19. “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” – Romans 5:8. By the faith in Him and His Word that God gives us we know Him as our merciful Savior. We know God as the perfect ‘Forgiver and Forgetter’ of our sins that He is.

God knows every one of us by name (Is. 43:1). God knows all of our needs (Mt. 6:8). God knows how many hairs are on our heads (Mt. 10:30). God knows the thoughts of our hearts (Jn. 2:24-25). But, praise God, He doesn’t know our sin. God remembers our sin no more so that all His actions toward you and me are forgiveness and peace. God gives us peace now in His forgiveness for our sins. We will have no fear but only peace on the Judgment Day because our sins will all be forgiven and forgotten by God. And God will give us perfect peace in our sinless home in heaven.

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
 My great Redeemer’s praise,
 The glories of my God and King,
 The triumphs of His grace!

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
 He sets the prisoner free;
 His blood can make the foulest clean;
 His blood avails for me.

See all your sins on Jesus laid;
 The Lamb of God was slain;
 His soul was once an offering made
 For every soul of man. Amen. (TLH #360:1, 4, 6)